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ADRIFT



ADrift

*The Story of
Twenty Days on a Raft
in the South Atlantic*

as told to

J. H. HUNTER

author of

"THE MYSTERY OF MAR SABA"

EVANGELICAL PUBLISHERS

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TO THOSE WHO LIVED
AND
TO THOSE WHO DIED
ON THE RAFT
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED.

*"O magnify the Lord with me and let us
exalt his name together. . . . The angel
of the Lord encampeth round about them
that fear him and delivereth them."*
—Psalm 34. 3; 7.

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INTRODUCTION

*"Ye who dwell at home,
Ye do not know the terrors of the sea."*

—Southey.

THEY THAT GO DOWN to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep" (Psalm 107:23, 24). So wrote the sweet singer of Israel in the long ago. But today the travellers on the great ocean highways of the world see other things. They see horrors undreamed of, and death in many and hideous forms is their constant companion. They also see sublime heroism, faith, endurance and human fortitude set against the background of the most inhuman warfare that ever scourged the race of man. Perhaps it may be said that all warfare is inhuman, which is no doubt true, but it has been left to Germany to brutalize even the inhuman through the indiscriminate slaying of innocent women and children.

The sea has produced many amazing stories, such as the saga of Captain Bligh's journey across the Pacific in 1787. The present war has given us many more that could rival that historic

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voyage. The story you will read in the following pages is no feat of pilotage or navigational skill such as others have told. It is the record of a lone woman's courage and a faith in God that helped to keep strong men sane and cheerful through three weeks of an experience the like of which few women have been called upon to endure. For twenty days Mrs. Ethel Bell and her two children, with fourteen other souls, drifted in the South Atlantic on a raft measuring only eight feet by ten! The narrative runs the gamut of emotional realism in its stark simplicity, both in what is told and what is left unrecorded. Cold and heat, hunger and thirst, hope and despair, were their daily portion. Great seas battered their frail craft and hungry sharks a bare twelve inches away were their constant companions. After three weeks such clothes as they had were in rags; their feet were swollen to twice normal size, until they looked as though their owners had elephantiasis, while feet and legs were covered with painful salt water sores. They were weary from lack of sleep, and at last, when rescue was near, death at the hands of their friends—through a ghastly error—almost overtook them all! That it did not do so was a miracle—but then it was all miracle from beginning to

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end, as you who care to read these pages will see. The story is written for one purpose only, and that is to illustrate the faithfulness of the God who said: "Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," and Who has also promised, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." This story is a very literal application of the latter text, but it is no less true in this case to say, "They endured as seeing Him who is invisible".

When all is said and done, no one can portray in words nor can anyone possibly conceive, the agony of body and mind that this servant of God must have suffered. Again and again as I talked to her I marvelled at the patience and endurance she showed during these three weeks of drifting in the cradle of the great deep. When you reach the end of her story, please remember that the terror and strain of these days and nights were much worse than anything that is recorded here. There are some things omitted that no offense might be given to anyone, recognizing that all on the raft were under the severest mental strain.

Ethel Bell comes of a missionary family. Her father, Rev. A. W. Roffe, was for many years Superintendent of the Christian and Missionary

Alliance in Canada. Her three brothers, Paul, Elroy and Edward, are all serving the Lord in the same mission in different parts of the earth. Perhaps it should be said here that Mrs. Bell had known much of sorrow, hardship and loss in her life long before the events recorded in the following pages took place. It seems as though God reserves some souls for special trials, that His grace might be made manifest. At the close of the last war she lay in the sanitarium at Gravenhurst, a sufferer from tuberculosis and apparently doomed to a lifetime of helpless inactivity. Consider her life and achievements against that background! She believes the Lord marvellously healed her in answer to prayer and her faith in His Word. Immediately she set her face towards the mission field, and a few years later married George Bell, a kindred soul of like missionary mind. Under the auspices of the Christian and Missionary Alliance both went forth to the French Sudan, where they did a magnificent piece of Christian work. Four children were born to them in the next few years, two of them twin boys. There also sorrow and tragedy from our human point of view visited them. When almost a year old the twins took sick, and within a few minutes of each other were gathered with the

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lambs of the fold to the bosom of the Lord. Seven years ago, while they were home on furlough, George Bell was killed in an automobile accident while returning from a missionary conference in New England. One might have thought that here was abundant reason for this woman, bereft of her children and her husband, to stay at home and enjoy the amenities of life among her "ain folk". But this intrepid missionary did not see it that way. With her two remaining little ones she sailed in 1938 for Africa, to tell the Gospel of redeeming grace in the place that had already claimed two precious little lives. After a time in the Sudan she went to the Ivory Coast, part of the French Colonial Empire, to do work there. The facts set forth in the following story were given to me at her parents' home at Gravenhurst, Ontario. Only the thread that binds them together is mine.

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CHAPTER ONE

Far, Far at Sea

"He will be our guide, even unto death."

—Psalm 48:14.

*"From rock and tempest, fire and foe
Protect them wheresoe'er they go."*

—W. Whiting.

THE STORY BEGINS ON the 16th of June, 1942. It had a happy ending on September 18th. That it did not close in a tragic fatality on that never-to-be-forgotten morning was due, I believe, to the merciful care and protection of God. Never shall I or those with me on that frail raft, that had been our home for the past nineteen days, be able to erase from our minds and memories the tragic emotions of those few moments, or forget the hope, the joy, the anticipation of rescue that was suddenly turned into deadly fear and black despair when the destroyer that we thought was coming to save us suddenly turned her guns upon us, and almost wrote the "finis" of death to that nightmare voyage. Etched in one's memory are the terrible events of those days, and particularly of that last day, when death roared over the waves to meet us! There was a world of sensation packed into those few

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moments as shells fell around us and we felt sure our final hour had come. Our last reflections were certainly not helped by the consciousness that death was being visited upon us through a ghastly mistake by our own friends, whom for a brief but terrible period we seemed unable to warn. But all that will come in its own time.

My children and I left our mission station at Bouake, on the Ivory Coast, on June 16th. We left with high hopes and joyous anticipation of a much-needed furlough. Mary is fourteen and Robert eleven. I need hardly state that it was no easy task to secure the necessary permission to move from what was then Vichy-controlled territory. There were many negotiations to be entered into, a multitude of letters to be written, interviews with French officials to be carried on, and all the time hopes and fears fluctuated. But we found the French officials, then as always, considerate, sympathetic and helpful. But the story of our experiences in getting to the coast would fill a book in itself. One had to be possessed of great patience those days. There was nothing we could do that we had left undone, so far as we knew, and having done all we waited patiently for the Lord to speak the word, open

the doors and tell us to go on. At that time the political situation in all French Africa was tense and one never knew what a day might bring forth. Dame Rumour was busy all day long. At times it seemed we would secure the necessary permission immediately, and then would come a hitch. At last, after long weeks of waiting, it came and we turned our faces homeward.

What a trip that was! One month of trekking through the colony towards the British territory and the port at which we were to embark. Endless delays occurred, innumerable difficulties were encountered, and always there was the fear in the background that we might be turned back before we reached the Gold Coast and the protection of the British flag. What a relief it was at last to cross the frontier, to see flying from the flagpole the Union Jack that told us no power could lay claim to us or prevent our going on our journey.

It was about August 16 that we arrived in Takoradi, the port from which we were to sail. But it is one thing to book a passage on a ship in peacetime, when one is almost certain of the day and the hour of sailing, and quite another to get a passage in time of war. We had to wait

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for one full month before we finally got on board the freight steamer that was to take us to New York. It was a boat carrying a cargo of palm oil. Its name must still remain anonymous! Besides ourselves there were two other missionaries—Mr. and Mrs. Shaw and their three children: Richard, aged 13; Georgia, 11, and Carol, 7; also one other gentleman, a Mr. Pearson, in the Customs service of Britain. This was the ship's complement of passengers — and as many as the boat could accommodate. In addition, there were some fifty members of the crew. All of them were Americans, though few of them could claim the United States as the land of their birth. Some were from the West Indies, others from Italy, Portugal, the Philippines and other places. Most of the officers were American-born. The captain was an excellent seaman, whose home was in New York. He had been with the company for many years, and was a most capable man. When we left Takoradi the sun shone brightly and the south wind blew softly. It was an ideal time of the year to voyage across the South Atlantic, and we looked forward eagerly to the voyage. Here were needed rest and recuperation in prospect, and the joy of anticipated reunion with friends and loved ones added to the

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trip. We knew, of course, that we should have to pass through the danger zone and we had heard many stories of good ships that had fallen prey to U-boats making the South Atlantic their "happy" hunting grounds. But we felt that we were ambassadors of the King, that our safe-keeping was His care, and that whether on land or sea we were in the centre of His will, and His banner over us was love. It was this consciousness that imparted peace and serenity to one's spirit, and enabled us to rest quietly the first two weeks, and which without doubt served us well in the terrible days that were to follow.

The accommodation on the boat was good, the food excellent and the weather ideal. It was difficult at times for us to realize that we were in a world at war. The warm sun shone from an unclouded sky for days at a stretch, the blue dome above matching the deep blue expanse of water over which we moved, for all the world like "a painted ship upon a painted ocean". At all hours of the day the merry laughter of the children could be heard on deck. They had speedily made friends with the crew, and with the exception, perhaps, of the bridge, there was no spot on the ship in which they were not welcome. But we

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were not allowed to forget that danger was ever near. Several times there was boat drill, not the slipshod affair it so often is on round-the-world liners, but a duty that was religiously gone through, and which we had to perform expeditiously and efficiently, as something on which our lives might well depend, and which, as later events proved, they did. At night the whole ship was blacked out, all portholes were darkened, even the slightest crack that might show a light being covered. Two weeks after leaving Takoradi we knew we were in the danger zone and every possible precaution was taken.

So we came to that fatal Sunday of August 30. The day was beautiful, the sun rising that morning in unclouded splendour to chase away the darkness of the night. Little did we realize that for many on that ship it was to be the last sunrise they would see, and that before it had set in the west some, at least, would be ushered into the Divine Presence to see the King in His beauty in a land that is fairer than day. But all that was mercifully hidden from our eyes as we had our devotions in the morning and commended ourselves to the loving care of our Heavenly Father. Over all that calm sea there seemed to be no other

humans but ourselves. We could not know that death was so close to us all, that lying in wait was the dread U-boat, manned by fiends as indifferent to human suffering as they are to the rules supposed to govern civilized men in this dreadful business of war.

We would often amuse ourselves watching the denizens of the deep disporting themselves, and on that Sunday they seemed to be particularly lively. The flying fishes darted like streaks of silver from the sea. Sometimes a shoal of them would skim through the air, rising and falling for perhaps a hundred yards before they again took to the water. Often they were chased by porpoises that tumbled in grotesque gambols about the bow of the ship. Frequently we would see one larger than usual rise into the air in a long curve, the whir of its fine wings distinctly visible as well as audible. These are everyday occurrences in the South Atlantic. Looking at them one could feel something of what stirred the heart of the Ancient Mariner as he saw them "and blessed them in their play". But there was a sinister side to the play of the deep, as when ever and anon a ravenous shark darted like a spectre through the blue water, or lazily turned

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on its back to expose long rows of saw-like teeth. Little did we dream that peaceful Sunday morning of the closer acquaintance with these dreadful monsters that was to be ours before many hours had passed. How true it is that "they that go down to the sea in ships see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep". We had no thought of any immediate danger that Sunday morning when we committed ourselves to the care of Him Whose way is in the mighty deep, and Whose path is in the great waters.

After lunch I had gone to my cabin to lie down, removing my dress and shoes. The Shaws were also resting in their cabin. The children were out on deck. It had just struck four bells (two p.m.) By day and night a strict lookout was maintained. We carried nine of a gun crew. Some of them were sunning themselves on the boat deck, some were on duty at the gun. It seemed but a minute or two after I entered my cabin before I heard the alarm and the dreaded cry from the lookout, "Torpedo on the starboard bow!" At the same moment I heard and felt the crash of the deadly missile as it found its mark in the ship's side. Simultaneously the alarm rang for us to take our life boat stations. We were

thankful then that the lifeboat drill had been so rigidly enforced and performed in no perfunctory manner. We knew exactly what to do. Everything seemed to happen at once. I donned my dress, and put my feet into my shoes in one act, and had my lifebelt on all in a matter of seconds. Robert and Mary rushed into the cabin at the first alarm, scrambled into their belts and all three of us were on deck in much less time than it takes to set down these words. Before we reached the deck, however, we were almost thrown off our feet as with an awful roar and sickening crash another deadly "tin fish" sealed the fate of our ship.

In moments such as these one lives a lifetime. It was exactly one minute and a half from the time the first torpedo struck until the ship disappeared! Perhaps I should have recounted earlier that before going to my cabin I had been sitting reading on the starboard side of the ship. Had I delayed my departure by many minutes I would not be telling this story today, as it was on that side of the ship that the torpedoes hit and wrought dreadful destruction. I relate this incident as another of the many illustrations of God's care that, to me at least, was manifest every moment of those perilous days.

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When we reached the deck the ship was listing badly. The lifeboat to which we were assigned was wrecked, and we were told by the first mate to get into another. Almost immediately, however, we were ordered out again, since that boat could not be lowered. Mary and I scrambled back on the deck, which by now was sloping at an alarming angle, but Robert had caught his foot in the boat and was unable to get clear before the ship turned over. It would be no more than the literal truth to say that the ship sank beneath our feet. One minute it was there, the next it was gone. We saw the blue-green sea come up to meet us, and I wondered if this were the end. "I shall see the children in heaven," I thought, as the waves closed over my head. I fully expected that the suction of the sinking ship would drag us down so far that our lifebelts might be of little use, but in a few seconds I seemed to see through a haze and found I could breathe again. The haze was that of palm oil which covered the sea all around with a thick scum and which now, of course, covered one's hair, face and clothes. As I looked around I was astonished to see Robert and Mary swimming

towards me. I will let Mary tell this part of the story:

"When the boat went down, mother and I were together. I did not know where Robert was. When I came to the surface I was surprised to see him swimming towards me. He had freed himself from the lifeboat when it capsized. As soon as he saw me he swam over and put his arms around me, and asked for mother. I said I did not know where she was, even though I was looking at her at that moment. She was so covered with oil that it was not until she spoke that we knew who she was! We swam to her and together we held on to a plank which was part of the wreckage that littered the sea all around us."

A curious thing which I am unable to explain was that when the ship sank Mary and I were together. She was holding my hand, and yet when we came to the surface a moment or two later we were about 200 feet apart. Many of the dreadful details of these moments, however, one fain would forget.

One fact I should like to record here to the glory of God was the utter absence of any fear of death. I set this down because I believe that

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the four rafts busily engaged picking up the survivors. It was at that moment that the submarine came to the surface quite close by. We could see men in the conning tower. It was a long and sleek monster of shimmering steel. Suddenly there came from it a burst of machine-gun fire, and I thought they were going to complete their evil work by killing us all! In a moment or two, however, it submerged and we saw it no more.

I may say here that not one of the lifeboats got away or perhaps this story might have had a happier ending for many who were lost. Some of the boats were destroyed by the explosion, and owing to the list of the ship it was found impossible to launch any of the others in the brief time at our disposal. Fortunately, the four rafts had been untied and floated clear. Mrs. Shaw was beside me on the deck when the ship went down. She and her husband had been lying down when the torpedo struck. Their cabin was shattered and the upper bunk fell down upon them, injuring Mr. Shaw quite badly. I never saw Mrs. Shaw or Georgia again. Just that Sunday morning she and I had talked about the goodness of God, and how little suffering missionaries were called upon to endure nowadays for Christ's sake compared

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with the pioneers of the missionary enterprise. She said that the Lord knew our hearts, and that we were prepared to die for Him. Little did either of us realize how soon she was to be called upon to make the supreme sacrifice with two of her loved ones. Why we three should have been saved and three of the Shaw family lost is something I cannot attempt to explain. God has His mysteries of grace; ways that we can neither fathom nor explain while we move through the half-lights and shadows of this world. I only know that like Faithful in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, they took the shortest way to the Celestial Gate, and that all the trumpets of God sounded them a welcome on the other side. That we were saved is to me an indication that God has still some service left for us to do here.

We had been in the water only a few minutes before we were pulled on board one of the rafts. A minute or two later I heard one of the sailors call out: "Help me with this man, he is wounded." It was Mr. Shaw. Gentle hands laid him on the raft, but he never spoke. He just lay there. Unfortunately, he was not on our raft or one might have ministered to him in some way. What his wounds were I cannot tell. All the time the rafts

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with us, but our raft was the most crowded, and even as it was there was hardly room for us to sit down. It is easy to be wise after the event, but I believe Captain Bogden did what he thought best under the circumstances, and that is all a man can do.

Once on the raft, we could take stock of our situation. We were thankful that all three of us were alive. Around us we could see the heads of others bobbing in a sea of oil—a sticky mess! As I have said, my head and face were covered with it. My hair, which was naturally long, was stuck together as though with cement. Thus it remained until we were rescued; then it had to be cut off, since it was impossible to comb it. One by one we saw the members of the crew drawn from the ocean—those of them who were still alive. How many perished when the torpedoes struck the ship I do not know. A number of them did, and several others were drowned when the ship went down. Many of those who were rescued were dressed in the scantiest of clothing, and these suffered much, both from the heat by day and the cold by night. Most of the young men of the gun crew were killed, and not one of them who reached the rafts survived. They were



*A U-Boat on the surface. These waters of the deep
take the lives of many brave men.*

all lovable fellows in their teens, and this was their first voyage. They had talked to the children and myself often, and all were looking forward eagerly to getting back to their homes in the United States and seeing their mothers again. I do not say this to play upon the sentiments of any reader, but rather to illustrate the awful horrors of war.

CHAPTER TWO

The Lonely Pillow

"O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth and of them that are afar off upon the sea."—Psalm 65:5.

*Star of Hope gleam on the billow
Bless the soul that sighs for Thee,
Bless the sailor's lonely pillow,
Far, far at sea."*

—J. C. Simpson.

CAPTAIN BENJAMIN BOGDEN was a good man, kind and considerate, as we were to prove in the next few days. But the loss of his ship and many of his crew seemed to have taken the heart out of him. It was the bos'n, James Peifer, who really took charge of the raft. He was a man of energy and action. Once the survivors had been picked up the rafts were lashed together as it was thought at first that this would be safest. As it turned out it was not the case. There were nineteen souls on our raft, and six or seven on each of the others. All the rest had perished either when the ship was struck or when it went down. It appeared to me that the other rafts were less seaworthy than ours, though I cannot say for sure. Anyway, they did not seem to ride the waves as well as the one we had.

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We were informed that our rations would be four ounces of water a day, two in the morning and two at night, with half a tin of pemmican each, or a ration of chocolate, malted milk tablets and crackers, but not always both.

Altogether there was just enough to keep us alive. I felt sorry for some of the men, who before long began to suffer from malnutrition and were reduced to mere skeletons before rescue came. But it is strange how one can adjust oneself to emergencies like this when life and death are the issues at stake. There was not one murmuring word from the men, then or at any time later, even when it seemed as though death would catch up with us at last, and when the temptation to eat everything at one meal became almost irresistible. But that first afternoon and evening no one thought much about food. We were too overcome by tragedy to think of eating. It is impossible to describe our feelings. Only a few moments before we had been resting peacefully in our cabins. Now the ship had sunk beneath the waves, with only a mass of wreckage strewning the face of the ocean to tell she had gone, while we who clung to the rafts were barely able as yet to comprehend what had taken place.

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Once again one realized the dreadfulness of war and the hideous tragedy that sin, which is the cause of war, has wrought in the world. The awful uncertainty of life was pressed in again upon one's mind. A short while ago there were men carefree and happy. Now they were as though they had never been. One would naturally have thought that such a visitation would cause those who survived to give thought to eternal things, but for the majority of them I am afraid it did not. Then when the westering waves of ebbing day cast their apocalyptic splendors across the broad surface of the sea, I remembered again that this God was our God Who controlled all things in heaven and earth and sea, and that His compassions towards us would never fail. There Eternity seemed to speak to me in the language of Time, setting things seen and unseen in their right relationship, adjusting one's perspective, and helping one to see how pitiful, how futile, was so much of the puny strivings of man. Nothing mattered but God, and the heart turned to Him, instinctively resting upon the abiding, unchanging promise of the Lord, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Through weary days and nights we proved that promise to be true.

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Captain Bogden was very kind. He and Robert sat on the floor of the raft all that first night. It was, of course, covered with water, and there was little sleep for either of them, but the Captain held Robert in his arms till daybreak. As a matter of fact, I doubt if anyone slept. There was little talking. Everyone was busy with his own thoughts—wondering, wondering. I found great comfort at night in just looking up. One by one the stars came forth, solemn eyes that looked down upon us, gleaming on our lonely pillow, "far, far at sea", some two-score homeless people adrift upon the unfathomable bosom of the mighty ocean. But if God could build the nest for the blind bird, and mark the fall of a sparrow, I knew He could also "temper the wind to the shorn lamb" and watch over his children, no matter where they were on earth or on the sea. During the days that followed I was to recall many times the words of Psalm 139, "If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

So passed the night, the longest, perhaps, that many of us had ever experienced. Dawn broke at last in roseate splendors over the waters, and

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we searched the horizon eagerly for some sign of a ship, but saw none. Day was welcomed by all. The four rafts were still together. On one of them Mr. Shaw sat with his head still in his hands, and thus he remained for days. The loss of his wife and Georgia seemed to have stunned him, and he may have been injured much worse than we realized. Richard wanted to go to him, but the captain would not permit it. Had he done so, as events turned out, it would only have added another life to the toll of the lost.

In the morning Mr. Peifer again got busy. He alone seemed to realize that if we were to be rescued some action had to be taken. Each raft was equipped with a sail and with oars. The bos'n lashed two oars together for a mast and hoisted a sail on it. This enabled us to steer in some fashion. I saw nothing of this done on the other rafts. Most of the men there seemed to have lost heart, and the look of utter hopelessness on some faces was heart-rending to see.

On Monday morning the sea was still covered with wreckage from the ship. We tried to salvage anything that might be used, particularly if it could be turned into articles of clothing. No one had anything but what they stood in, and

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this was not much, in most cases. One man on our raft had nothing but a pair of swimming trunks, which he was wearing when the ship went down. He survived the three weeks, but was badly burnt and suffered greatly, as did the rest of us, from sores. Among the debris floating near us Mr. Peifer saw a mattress. This he rescued. Then he secured a ladder and several other pieces of wood. These he had made into another raft, on which he spread the soaking mattress. On this Captain Bogden would occasionally go and recline. He was tall, well-built and strong, and the cramped space on the raft must have played havoc with his nerves. He could not stretch out, but welcomed the change to this "lounging room". The mattress was always soaking wet, so one can imagine what it must have felt like to take a siesta under such conditions. Even the captain grew tired of it and ceased to use. Eventually the bos'n cut it adrift, since it continually bumped against us during the night, and we feared our raft might suffer damage. We had also a small raft attached to ours—called the "doughnut" because of its shape. It was made of cork, with slats across the bottom. It permitted two men to stretch out in it, head to feet. Of course, it was always half

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submerged in the water. For several nights two men had to stay there. They took it in turns, to relieve somewhat the congestion on our raft and permit some of the men to rest. The men hated it, and one does not wonder at that. Every night while he lived Captain Bogden called for volunteers, and when these were not forthcoming he had to order two men to spend the night in "the doughnut". This practice was discontinued after the first week.

People sometimes wonder how we passed our days and nights. They were spent in little inconsequential things. Nothing was too small to afford some diversion or interest. Thus on the Monday, the day after we had been torpedoed, we were surprised to hear the men on the other rafts singing. It turned out that one of them had a birthday, and we all joined heartily in the strains of "Happy Birthday to You". Never had any birthday of the voyagers been spent under more adverse conditions, and never were circumstances less conducive to happiness than these. Poor chap, it was his last birthday on this earth. One could only pray that he might be "twice born". Then he would die only once, and that death would be but the passing to eternal life.

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While he was with us Captain Bogden made little Carol Shaw his special care, looking after her tenderly and doing for her what he could. The child had broken her arm at the elbow through falling on deck when the ship was torpedoed. For three weeks she endured the pain, keeping her arm bent all the time, and never crying except when someone inadvertently bumped against it, which was quite often, because of our cramped condition. When we reached Barbados the doctors immediately set the arm, and assured me that there was every prospect that the bone would knit perfectly. She was a brave little soldier, and I would like to pay my tribute to her courage, faith, and endurance. I should like Christian people who read this to remember these two Shaw children in prayer. They suffered a sore bereavement, and have come through an ordeal trying in the extreme.

One of the articles we had salvaged was a stout piece of canvas. This was tied to the two masts across the back of the raft and afforded a measure of protection from the wind, and some little privacy for all. I should like to say here that throughout the experience all the men behaved towards us like gentlemen and did everything in

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their power to save us from embarrassment and make things as easy for us as they could. It must, of course, be remembered that in a situation like this, with life at stake and death ever near, many of the customs and conventionalities of civilized life lose a great deal of their significance and importance.

I have pointed out before that we had nothing except the clothes in which we stood. We had no toilet articles of any kind, not so much as comb or toothbrush! Each morning ablutions consisted of splashing some of the oily water in the raft on our face, and rubbing some of it in our mouth as a dentifrice. I will admit that it was not pleasant, but what would you have done had you been in our place? It was a day or two before we finally got clear of the oil, and could get even a little clean salt water for washing purposes. We had only two granite cups on the raft, and out of these we all had to drink twice a day. They were dirty and covered with grease, and at any other time would have caused us to shudder, but I can assure you that no water ever tasted as sweet as that. Once we got clear of the oil we did manage to effect some improvement in the appearance of the cups.

THE LONELY PILLOW

For several days the rafts remained tied together. Soon, however, it became obvious that we were making little progress and that the lives of all were being endangered, since there was imminent danger of the rafts being broken up by the constant knocking one against the other. It was decided to cut them free and let each raft fend for itself. This was accordingly done. It was sad to see them go, since none of us knew if we would ever see each other again. Adversity had drawn us close. We were all companions in misfortune, one in our sufferings and sympathies, sharing alike the hazards and dangers of the deep. So we separated.

With our little sail set, and the trade wind behind us, we drifted due west. Soon the other rafts were mere dots on the surface of the sea. Shortly they and their human cargo disappeared from our sight—forever! What happened to the other three rafts I cannot tell. There has been a report that one of them was washed up, with a lone survivor, on some island. The other two vanished completely. What disasters overtook the brave men and the young lads they had on board I do not know. Did they ever sight land again or see a friendly ship? Did they slip off

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one by one into the deep waters as hunger weakened them? Did storms overtake them? Did they die of thirst or hunger, or in madness cast themselves into the water until none was left, while the rafts drifted on untenanted, shepherded by the unseen currents of the ocean until they were cast at last upon some lonely shore with other wreckage and flotsam of the deep? These are questions I ask again and again. Through many days and nights I have wondered and wondered. I am still wondering, and will likely continue so to do to the end of my days and beyond. Perhaps, then, I shall find the answer, when the books are opened and the sea gives up its dead.

CHAPTER THREE

Ora Pro Nobis [*Pray for us*]

"This poor man cried . . . the Lord heard."

—Psalm 34:6.

"He that will learn to pray, let him go to sea."

—Herbert.

FOR PRACTICALLY THE ENTIRE TIME we were on the raft the children and I occupied one corner of it. It could not well be otherwise, for there was no room to move about; only sufficient to sit down and stand up. Most of the time I just sat still. But for some people that can be the most trying and maddening experience. I think it must have been so with Captain Bogden. I felt terribly sorry for him. I well recall him saying to me during that first week he was with us: "Mrs. Bell, I cannot understand how you can sit there hour after hour and day after day, scarcely moving." Poor man, he suffered acutely because of the crowded quarters, and as I have related, would occasionally scramble on to the other raft the bos'un had made and there stretch out on the mattress that was half submerged in the sea. There he would lie for hours, evidently finding some relief even in such discomfort from

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the maddening, cramping conditions of the raft. For an active man one can scarcely think of an ordeal more trying than that of just sitting still for days. The legs of some of the men would cramp and "go to sleep" repeatedly. For myself, I can only say that the Lord gave me patience and grace of endurance that enabled me to sit in practically one position until our tribulation ended. Occasionally during the last week I would stand up and try to exercise by lifting one foot, then the other, but even this mild exercise became too painful, since my feet and legs were so swollen with sores from long immersion in the salt water.

Whatever others may say or think, I can only set it down that, so far as the children and I were concerned, whatever fortitude we showed was God's doing. Despite the fluctuating hopes and fears that may have possessed us, there was never a moment when faith failed or the slightest doubt possessed my mind that God was with us to sustain and, if it pleased Him, to deliver! I had proved the Divine goodness on too many occasions in the course of my missionary career, and had seen His hand of love in too many of the dark and bitter experiences of life, to doubt Him now.

Many people have asked me if there were any

religious beliefs manifested by those on the raft. I can only say there was, with one or two exceptions, a reverence and respect for my Christian convictions. This will be seen in the incident I am about to relate. As I have previously said, we escaped from the ship with no clothing but what we had on, and this was not much in the case of some of the men. I often longed for my Bible, Testament or my Daily Light, that I might refresh my own soul with a portion from the Word, and perhaps read some of the grand and glorious promises of God to my fellow-passengers in distress. However, that was not to be had. I did strive to continue the daily devotions the children and I had been accustomed to, and we repeated some Scripture every morning, sang a hymn or two and had a little time of prayer. The men seemed to enjoy it when we sang. "Jesus, Saviour, pilot me, over life's tempestuous sea", or perhaps "Rock of Ages, cleft for me", or "Jesus, lover of my soul". If it produced no other effect upon them, it was at least a break in the dreadful monotony of just sitting and staring at the far horizon, looking for the ship that never came. Many a time, however, I heard talk that made me shiver, particularly when the name of our blessed Lord was bandied about in oaths and

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curse. But this was by only a few of the men and even they, I thought, became more careful of their words as the hope of rescue faded from their hearts.

We had not been conducting our morning worship for very long before the men asked if I would not pray for them and with them. I had been doing the former, and was glad they had asked that we might do the latter. From that time on there was never a morning that we did not have our little season of fellowship together. I do not want to leave the impression that these men had turned Christian overnight. They had not. In fact, so far as I could judge, they knew next to nothing of the "plan of salvation". Some of them professed to be Roman Catholics, and they may have had some dim and hazy idea of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ for the sin of man, but of the great fundamental truth of Christianity summed up in the words, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" they did not appear to have even the shadow of an idea. One of the men came and asked me for an explanation of the faith that I professed and, as simply as I could, I told him of the love of God in the Lord Jesus Christ, making the way of sal-



*Mrs. R. F. Bell and her two children,
Robert and Mary.*

vation as plain as I knew how. He was visibly impressed and professed to see the light, and later, when we reached Barbados, he came to me and said he had been "born again". I thank God if this is so, for if true, it would make all the miseries we endured more than worth-while. I would like to point out, however, that there was in no sense of the word a "revival" on the raft. But there was a deepening sense of the solemn responsibilities of life, induced no doubt by the imminent prospect of death, which made the men amenable at least to the Gospel message.

It was the custom of the children and myself to recite some of the well-known psalms and other portions of Scripture each day, and these the men listened to with the keenest attention. How thankful we were that we had these portions of the Scriptures in our minds and hearts, and how we regretted that we had not hidden away more of God's Word, that we might have used it at such a time as this. At the end of our devotions we would recite the Lord's Prayer, and it did my heart good to hear some of the crew join with us, and to note the almost awed reverence with which they pronounced "Our Father". Who can estimate the impression that may have

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been made on some of them, or where the good seed may have found lodgment and may yet bring forth fruit to life eternal? I do know that ever after the men would not think of having their morning "meal" before we had asked God's blessing on it, and had our brief time of thanksgiving before the Throne of Grace. Occasionally the pangs of hunger were too much and one of the men might start to eat his morsel of pemmican in the morning as soon as he had received it—and who could blame him? I certainly could not, but disapproving looks from the others, and a request to me to "bless" the meat, were invariably voiced. I never pressed the matter upon them, and was careful about preaching at them, but always the request came from them that I should conduct morning prayers. I was glad to do so, and each day, for that brief space at least, the unscen and eternal things were made real.

I asked the bos'n if he had any objection to my telling the men a Gospel story. Hard-boiled as he was, he said he had not, but liked to hear such stories himself. I availed myself of the opportunity and either at their own suggestion or when I thought the occasion propitious, I would give a simple outline talk to the men. There

was never once when these occasions were not hailed with delight. I do not say it was because it was a Gospel story they were to hear. It may have been only that they welcomed anything that would take their minds off the sombre monotony of our days and for a little while give them something else to think about. Whatever the cause, I had many an opportunity of witnessing for the Lord, and setting forth the essential truths of the Gospel. It is hardly necessary for me to say that these brief expositions were of the simplest kind. With a little prayer to the Lord to stimulate my memory, and bring to my remembrance such portions of Scripture as He would have me recall, I would deal with a psalm or some very familiar part of the New Testament. Perhaps some reader may be interested in the themes I chose. Here are three of these short talks, as I recall them: On one occasion I took Psalm 13, which I thought I could remember. It has only six verses, and begins: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord?" and closes with an ascription of praise. My theme on that occasion was, "Trust and Rejoice". I pointed out the fourfold "How long" of the Psalmist and emphasized the glorious truth that God never forgot His people, no matter how bitter the experience they might be called upon

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to pass through. If God hid His face from us it was because of sin. Nothing else could come between us and the Divine love of the heavenly Father. The psalm that began with sighing ended with singing. Once Christ came into our lives sorrow was turned to laughter. If our trust was in Christ we could always rejoice, even in the midst of such experiences as we were at the moment going through. I do not think that many sermons have been preached under such conditions. The men sat silent while I spoke my brief words. The long swell of the South Atlantic bore us gently up and down, and the great sharks swam lazily not two feet away from us, always there—waiting, waiting—as though sensing an inevitable end and mocking the God in Whom we had put our trust.

On another occasion I spoke on the subject of "Peace", pointing out from Scripture that there was no peace for the wicked. This was what was most desired in the world, and most desired by every individual. I said that it could be had through the Lord Jesus Christ if we trusted in Him, and it could be had nowhere else. I finished that one with Philippians 4:7 as the final result of faith, "And the peace of God which passeth

all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Still another favourite that I recall was that of Jesus walking on the sea. It was listened to eagerly and with rapt attention. The setting for this story was perfect, and the very precariousness of our position served to emphasize the lessons of the story. My text were the words: "It is I, be not afraid." I pictured the setting on Galilee with the little boat tossed by the billows and in imminent danger of being lost. Then across the waves came the Saviour, bringing words of comfort and cheer, and then, following his entry into the boat, a great calm. I pointed out that the God we believed in and the Saviour we trusted was Lord of all creation. He counted the very hairs of our head and marked the fall of a sparrow. The sea was His and He made it. He made the mountains and framed the heavens, and held all the forces of nature under His control. Not only could He still the waves of the ocean, but control the angry passions of human life. As soon as He was received into our lives there was always "a great calm".

Nothing could have been more simple than these little talks. Indeed, I would have made

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them more so if I could. They were given to men facing death in a lingering form, most of whom did not have even an elementary knowledge of the great truths of the Gospel. I thank God again and again for the simple message of redeeming grace I had to proclaim, and often wonder what message a modernist preacher would have given under such circumstances.

Each morning I prayed very definitely for the strength and courage needed for the day, and I want to record the fact that God did hear and answer prayer. Without His grace and strength I do not believe that one of us would have survived the ordeal of these twenty days or could have retained our sanity to the end. Again and again the fearful possibilities of what might happen, and at times almost did happen, took hold upon me, and I cried to God to save us from the horrors I could all too easily visualize, and always God heard and answered prayer. Let me say that I am not in the least interested in writing pious platitudes or any abstract theories regarding the psychological exercise of prayer. We were desperate people in desperate straits. The grim shadow of death in fearful form lay over us all. It might come by hunger, thirst, or madness,

or a combination of all three, and then there were—the sharks! I had four children for whom I felt myself responsible, the oldest fourteen, and I was the only woman in that eight by ten frail craft just twelve inches above an illimitable ocean that was some four or five miles deep. So when I say that God answered our prayers I mean just that. I am relating facts no less wonderful, no less amazing, because they deal with things that are spiritual. The exercise of faith may have been spiritual, but its results were astonishingly real and concrete, as you will find if you peruse this narrative to the end. On that raft faith became the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

I have called this chapter "Ora Pro Nobis", since it has so much to do with prayer. Perhaps it is the most important chapter in the book. I believe it is, since it deals with what I consider to be the greatest factor in our preservation and ultimate rescue. While on this subject I should like to say how much the intercessions of friends at home meant to us, and should like to express my humble thanks to them for their daily remembrance of our needs before the Throne of Grace. Perhaps this word will also encourage others to

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"lift up hands of prayer, both for themselves and for those who call them friends". You cannot tell what power or influence your prayers may be exercising or in what strange ways God may be working in lands far away, or in other lives, in answer to your intercessions. We have proved that to be true in our own experience as it has been proved in the lives of others. Let the atheist laugh or the skeptic sneer, it is still gloriously true that "more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of". I would often say to the children, "Such and such a group is having its prayer meeting now". In memory we would turn back on Wednesdays to our church at Bouake in the Ivory Coast, where we knew the missionaries and the native Christians would be praying for our safe journeying—though they little realized how great was our need of their prayers. Such thoughts and recollections never failed to uplift and encourage us.

Since coming home we have received from friends many letters that confirm this conviction, if such confirmation were needed, that God heard and answered prayer. A few of these I would like to quote:

"You will probably never learn of the many people who have prayed for you during your years

ORA PRO NOBIS. (*Pray for us*)

of service in Africa, and especially during the last few weeks. Little did I think, when in our September meeting I made request for prayer on your safe journey, that I should learn the next day of your safe arrival at Barbadoes."

"From the time we knew you were coming home we began praying for your safety and protection."

"The peculiar thing—or wonderful thing—is, that previous to reading about your experience I had a definite burden for you for the past several weeks. I always pray for you and the children, but somehow for a time it was different, and when I read in the papers about your experience, I knew why."

And a cousin in Toronto has told us: "For months I have had such a burden of prayer for you."

These, it seems, were storing up prayer that afterwards was answered during the days of our desperate need.

I set these down as an encouragement to further prayer on the part of those in the homelands who are holding the cords for missionaries in the distant places of the earth. Pray, pray, pray! We little realize the power of this mighty weapon that God has placed in our hands. Nothing is impossible if we will but pray. Nothing is possible if we do not. Prayer is the strongest force in the universe today and, I believe, the one least

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used. The world could have been evangelized long ago, this ghastly war with all its horrors prevented, and the Kingdom of God established upon the earth, had the Christian Church only been faithful in prayer.

We had set our course for Trinidad, which was due west. The wind was behind us, and never once did it vary. Wind and currents were in our favour, and for the greater part of the journey the sea was fairly calm, in all of which I saw again the tender mercies of God. As the shadows of departing day crept over the broad stretches of the South Atlantic we would begin to make ourselves as comfortable as possible in preparation for the night. The children would lie down with their heads on my lap while I generally nodded—I cannot call it anything else—with my chin supported by my lifebelt. Mostly I watched the stars, and beautiful indeed was the glory of God spread abroad in the heavens above. One had an unobstructed view of the sky from my vantage point on the raft. As the long nights wore on, I watched eagerly for the Morning Star, which never failed to cheer and uplift my heart. And as I looked I could see the glory of the new day break over the vastness of the ocean. Noise-

ORA PRO NOBIS. (*Pray for us*)

lessly the light would come when the night was done, "and the crimson streak on ocean's cheek grew into the great sun". Such were the nights, and such the days. There was peace in the blue heavens when one looked above, and the blue-green sea lapped gently against the raft, making little more sound at times than a sighing-slumber breath, a hushed whisper that seemed to speak of eternal things as the long swell lifted our frail craft and bore us onward. And into one's heart, even in the midst of a situation like this, would steal the peace that passeth understanding. Does it seem strange to you? Why should it be? The acid test of our faith in the promises of God is never found in the easy-going, comfortable ways of life, but in the great emergencies, the times of storm and of stress, the days of adversity, when all human aids fail.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Shadow of Death

*"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?
Or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?"*
—Job 38:17.

*No cross of marble marks the place
Of their eternal sleep,
Men of the sea whose grave is in
The vast and boundless deep.
Their names are not inscribed above
A bed of common clay—
But on the scrolls of rolling waves,
In wreathes of swirling spray.
Beneath the mighty dome of heaven,
Where the winds blow free—
Their epitaphs are written
In the language of the sea.*

—Strong.

THIS CHAPTER SHALL BE BRIEF. The facts are not easy to relate, and one would fain pass over them. Consider our situation. We had been drifting for a week. The other rafts had long since disappeared, to be seen or heard of by us no more. Our crowded, floating home seemed to be drifting just nowhere. Day succeeded day and night followed night, but only the endless vistas of the ocean and the heaving white crests of the billows met our gaze. Already the strain

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of close proximity was beginning to tell on our nerves. Have you ever realized what a strain this can be? To have people always at your elbow day and night, so close that you cannot move, and from whom you cannot possibly get away. Even on the closest of friends such a situation would impose a severe strain. But it is infinitely worse when one is placed among those whose life and whose thoughts, aims, ideals and inmost convictions, are almost entirely at variance with one's own. Then, of course, there was the additional strain of being the one woman of the entire company. It is little wonder that placed in such a situation, people can become obsessed with each other, and that latent hatreds hardly suspected suddenly blaze into flame as the days go on and nerves become more and more frayed. We had no room to move about. We could never get more than a few inches from each other. We were sure to tread on someone's feet if we shifted our position ever so little. Sharp words and bitter recriminations were not infrequent. Fortunately for those whose feet were trodden upon, none of us wore shoes. We were all in our bare feet, which, as I have said before, were continually immersed in the water on the raft floor. Then the Angel of Death struck us.

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We called him "Flags" since he had been the signaller on the boat. His name was Croons. He was one of the younger members of the crew and in his early twenties. I do not think he was very robust, but apparently he was of a wiry type. The children liked him. I think he must have been hurt internally when the ship was torpedoed. At least he said he was. Most of the time he was with us he just sat and did not say much. He looked wistful and lonely. Sometimes he spoke to the children. One night he asked Mary if she had slept. She said she had, and he said, with longing in his voice, "I wish I could say that." I do not think he slept much all the time he was on the raft. Occasionally his mind seemed to wander, and he would talk in his sleep. It was obvious that he was in a bad way, but the nature of his trouble none of us could tell, nor could we have done anything for him if we had known what it was. Every day he had his ration of pemmican and water like the rest of us, and when he was at last too weak to eat one of the men held him in his arms and gently tried to feed him. Often he expressed his desire for a cup of coffee, and one night we heard him say, "I've got a cup of coffee". Some of the men awoke from their uneasy slumbers with a

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start of anticipation, only to discover it was poor Flagg talking in his sleep. I think it was the next night that he died. He was very weak when the rations were handed around, and just lay in the arms of one of the crew. He nibbled at a little pemmican, but was too weak to help himself. He died quietly before the break of day. The children say they heard him say just before he died, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Whether this was so or whether he even knew the 23rd Psalm, I cannot tell. Perhaps he had learned it as a child in a Christian home, and in his last moments, out of the great and unforgotten deeps of memory, its hallowed words may have come to him at last with a blessed message of hope as the soul of Flagg answered the last signal and departed to its Maker. His end was peaceful and without pain, so far as we could judge. A moment or two later the morning sun tipped the eastern horizon and flooded the world with light. It shone on the face of the dead man, peaceful in repose, now done with Time and all its hours.

There was silence on the raft that morning. Death is always a solemn thing, and in the circumstances in which we were placed doubly so.

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We had our rations and our devotions, and the men asked me if I would combine with the latter a burial service for their departed comrade. What could I do? I had neither prayer book nor Bible and knew nothing of the life or beliefs of the deceased. I committed the matter to God, spoke a word to the men, then prayed briefly—not for the one who had gone, but for those of us who were left to face the unknown future, with all that it might hold. I then turned my head away as the body of our companion was consigned to the deep, “without a grave, unknelt, uncoffined and unknown”. Then we took up again the inconsequential things that made up our days. Someone remarked that it was a lovely morning. We had not noticed it, however, since lying across our raft was the dark shadow of death.

The north-east trade wind blew softly and we made headway westward. We had set our course for the West Indies, or at least where we thought they lay. Each day hope surged anew through our hearts. We buried Flagg, and then turned our thoughts on life and the hope of rescue. We wanted to forget the grisly messenger who had come to remind us that we were all





RESCUED—Seamen being rescued by a destroyer. It was the type of raft as here shown, only a little larger (8'x10'), on which Mrs. Bell and her family were adrift for 20 days.

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shadows passing through this vale of mortality; at least, I think that is how the men felt. But we were not to be left long without a more bitter experience with the last enemy. It was only a day or two later that the captain complained that he was not feeling well. He was the last man on the raft with whom one would have associated sickness, a big, healthy and strong man from New York. But he was never well from the day the ship went down. Whether he, like Flags, had been hurt I do not know. I think he must have been. Either that or he died of a broken heart. The sinking of the ship, and the loss of so many of the crew were sore blows to him, and from the first day we were adrift despair seemed to seize hold of him. Perhaps he brooded over the misfortune, or perhaps foolishly blamed himself. The disaster may have crushed his spirit and robbed him of any desire to live. There was only one other officer on board our raft, Mr. Joseph Greenwell, and he made the captain his special care. There was not much one could do, but all that could be done was done. The night the captain died, Mr. Greenwell held him in his arms and tried as best he could to make his last hours comfortable. Once again the silence of death was over all, and the brevity and uncertainty of

CHAPTER FIVE

Wonders of the Deep

*"These see the works of the Lord and his wonders
in the deep."—Psalm 107:24.*

*"He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm."*

—Cowper.

WE WERE BUT ONE FOOT FROM THE WATER. All that was between us and the great depths were a few boards and floats, and thus our situation was none too secure. On several occasions the bos'un shouted at us, "You folks that believe in prayer had better pray now, 'cause this raft's breaking up." That did not by any means increase our sense of security. Fortunately the raft held together to the end because, I believe, the hand of the Angel of the Lord was on it.

Every day we tried to devise something of interest, and nothing was too small to command attention. It was a relief from just sitting and staring at the horizon, and helped to lessen the tension that was slowly but surely developing and which I viewed with increasing apprehension. Especially did the children need some di-

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version. Richard and Carol would amuse themselves for hours on end by recalling what their friends on the mission station would be doing at particular times each day. Mrs. So-and-So would be doing this and someone else would be doing that. It was therefore with delight that we hailed the announcement of the second cook, Mr. Woodman Potter, that he was "going a-fishing". From a first-aid kit he secured a safety pin which he fashioned into a hook. With great patience he unravelled a piece of hemp and joined the strands together to form a fishing line. The children found a never-ending delight in watching him. He was no Isaak Walton, perhaps, but he had the patience of Job. The special object of his angling was the pilot fish. These are about twelve inches in length, and get their name from the fact that they generally accompany sharks, and secure their food from the latter's teeth after it has torn its prey. We had many of these monsters around the raft. They attached themselves to us the first day we were on the raft, and they never left us. When we were at last picked up, the destroyer that rescued us turned machine guns on fourteen of them that were hovering around the raft.

After many attempts, the fisherman succeeded in hooking two of the pilot fish, and landed them triumphantly on board. He then proceeded to skin them and extract the backbone. This done, he divided them into seventeen neat squares, giving each of us one. They were quite raw, of course. Nevertheless, there was not one of us who did not eagerly seize upon his share and devour it with relish! Such is the effect that long-sustained hunger had produced on our appetites. I may say that we were always hungry, though that did not bother me personally so much as thirst. Unfortunately, the cook caught no more fish, which was a pity, since they made a welcome addition to our meagre rations. For the benefit of shipowners I should like to say that it would be an excellent thing to see that each raft or boat is equipped with a few hooks and a line. We had no difficulty about bait since there were lots of sea minnows swimming around our feet in the raft.

Occasionally it rained, which helped greatly with our water supply. This is how we caught the rain. The canvas I have mentioned before, which served as a shield from the sun by day and the wind by night, was attached to poles

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and stretched across the four corners of the raft. It sagged in the middle, and a hole was made in the centre. When the rain fell the water ran naturally towards the centre and through the hole.

The bos'n sat under this canopy. He had secured the felt lining of a soldier's helmet which had belonged to one of the gun crew and wore it all day on his head. Whenever it rained he snatched it off, held it at the outlet of the canvas and as it filled up with water he poured it into our two cups and handed it around to drink! Later we used the pemmican tins to catch the water. I remember on one occasion during a shower seeing the water gather in the cuff of the trousers of one of the men. With his consent I scooped it out and drank it eagerly. Unconventional it might be, but it was precious water, and that, to us, meant life.

It was with such inconsequential diversions that we passed our days. When there was nothing else to do, which was most of the time, we would watch the play of the denizens of the deep. There were beautiful fish of all kinds and colours in these warm southern waters. One of the largest, about three feet long and brilliant

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blue in colour, the men said was a tuna. There were many of those, in addition to others more vividly coloured. Occasionally a school of friendly porpoises would gambol near us, though these did not approach closely to the raft. The flying fish were innumerable. Whole schools of them would rise and rush through the air, to vanish with a splash fifty yards away, only to be followed by others in quick succession as the motion of the raft disturbed them. The sharks, like the poor, were always with us. What shall one say about them? Often, as something was tossed overboard, they would come up with a rush, turning on their backs and exposing white bellies, their rows of razor-like teeth gleaming through the blue-green water—cruel, rapacious monsters, dreaded by sailors and landsmen alike, loathsome scavengers of the deep. By some uncanny instinct they are attracted from afar to the place of death. I have heard that the shark eats man as he eats anything else that is edible, and not from a natural depravity or any acquired taste for human flesh. I cannot vouch for the truth of this. I do know that we shuddered as we saw them daily hovering around our frail home and ready to seize on anything or anyone that should fall into the sea. I was constantly

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on the watch, particularly at night, to see that no hand or foot of the children should inadvertently trail in the water to become the prey of the fearful teeth of these ravenous monsters. Robert is the authority for the story that one of the crew lay down to rest one day with his long hair hanging over the edge of the raft. Suddenly he jerked himself up, crying that a shark had snapped at his hair.

One day a large fish jumped clear of the water and almost, but not quite, landed on the raft. This was a great disappointment to all of us, since it would have furnished us with extra, much-needed food, even if we had to eat it raw. Most of the time some large birds accompanied us. I thought they were seagulls but the men said they were a species of wild duck. One night when Mr. Greenwell was on watch and standing up beside the mast, a dove or a pigeon of some kind landed on his head. He was the most surprised man in the world, so surprised that he made no attempt to catch it, and after a moment's rest it spread its wings and flew away.

I found a never-ending source of wonder in the sky and the sea. Despite our anxieties, the works of the Creator filled one with a sense of

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joy, security and peace. We were in His hands, whatever might happen to us. During the day the sky was generally unclouded, a dome of dark blue, fringed often with peaceful cumulus clouds motionless on the horizon, and looking as though they had been chopped off just where the sea and the sky met, proving that the world is round. But it was at sunset that one's soul was lost in wonder, love and praise. Never can I forget the glory that was revealed as the Divine Artist splashed His colours over the sky in a riot of beauty almost painful to behold, and quite impossible to describe. In apocalyptic splendors the sun would go down, turning the sea into one great moving vastness of gold. It seemed then as though God came very near to us, to crown with glory and the light of His Presence our little raft, rocked in the cradle of the mighty deep.

CHAPTER SIX

Storm and Sunshine

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still."—Psalm 107:29.

*"Day is ended, darkness shrouds
The shoreless seas and stormy clouds."
—Peacock.*

I WOULD NOT LIKE TO CONVEY the impression that we had always calm seas and plain sailing—far from it. Most of the time there was some wind and the long, broad swell of the Atlantic carried us gently onward. At other times the wind increased and the waves rose high. Once we had a severe storm, severe, that is, to us, situated as we were, though it might have passed without comment had we been in the safety of the ship. I can vividly recall the day it broke upon us. As the sun set the sky took on a yellow, angry hue, and without even a seaman's "weather eye" one could see we were in for a "blow". Before nightfall it was upon us, and none of us, I am sure, would care to go through the same experience again on such a frail craft. Hour after hour we watched the never-ending succession of roaring, green-blue mountains of water

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rushing towards us, wondering all the while if the next would be the one destined to usher us into eternity.

It is one thing to watch a storm from the safe, warm enclosure of a modern liner's drawing room, or even from the shelter deck. It is another and infinitely more awe-inspiring experience to view it from a precarious seat only twelve inches above the ocean and watch each oncoming wave rise higher and higher until in thundering triumph it is upon you, tossing your little raft like a feather and keeping you constantly drenched to the skin. When we were in the trough of the sea the waves were twenty or thirty feet above us. They blotted out the sky, so that all that was visible was an immense wall of water that we thought must surely overwhelm us. Then, just when we thought we could not survive, our little raft would climb the great sides of the breakers, to perch for a moment like a duck on the crest, disclosing a heaving sea of white horses. Then would come the swift descent into the great hissing hollow between the wave just past and the wave just coming, while its foam-walled surface of unnatural smoothness seemed to be sinking us into Tartarus itself! This ascent and de-

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scent, performed every minute or so throughout the night, never lost its potentialities of terror, but thanks to the seaworthiness of our little raft and the Divine hand of God on the tiller, we rode out the storm right gallantly. Many people have asked us how we managed to keep from falling off the raft as it climbed the sides of the huge breakers. I cannot tell, but we seemed to hold to our seats without any great difficulty, though how it would have fared with us had the raft been less seaworthy, or had one of these huge waves broken right over us, I do not know. I can only maintain as I have done before, that God was in it. There is no other explanation I have to offer than this. All the forces of nature are under the control of God. Of those in similar plight His Word says: "He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths. They reel to and fro and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses." I cannot give any other explanation of our survival than that which is contained in these verses. His banner over us was love and his compassions failed not day by day.

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There were other occasions when the wind and the waves were high, threatening us with disaster. Again we had recourse to prayer that our heavenly Father would still the raging of the sea and give us a calm night. In each case we saw the elements quiet down about sunset and afford us a comparatively quiet night. The reader may differ as to the cause, but I was there and ought to know. It was miracle, miracle all the way.

It is said of John Wesley that he lived in a realm of perpetual miracle. That seems to me to describe the three weeks' journey of this raft. God's hand was guiding it all the way. These Divine interpositions were too many and too varied to be glossed over by the mere term coincidence. It was not only in the big things, such as our preservation through the storm, in which one saw the finger of God, but in a multitude of little, or seemingly little things, one discerned the loving care of a heavenly Father. Take the fact that, while we were frequently drenched to the skin, and during the entire twenty days our clothes were never fully dry, yet no one suffered from a bad cold. Under other circumstances pneumonia would almost certainly have been the inevitable consequence for some of us at least.

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Or consider this fact: Neither the children or myself were inured to the sea, but though tossed about for a score of days and nights, none of us suffered from seasickness. Admitted that we did not have much to eat, yet what we did have was often nauseating, as for instance the raw fish that we ate and the oily water we drank, yet we suffered no ill-effects from them. Again, I am greatly subject to neuralgia under ordinary conditions and have to be careful of draughts, but never once, despite the most adverse of circumstances experienced on the raft, did I suffer a twinge of pain from this cause.

It needs no great gift of imagination to realize the discomfort we were in at all times. Such clothes as we had were almost as hard as boards through being constantly wet with salt water, then partially dried with the sun during the day, only to be saturated again. The nights were the worst. Sometimes someone sleeping would roll against another or strike against one of the sores that now infected all our feet. That would be the signal for an expostulation which would awaken some of the men from their slumber and cause an outburst of rage. I am glad to say that such outbursts never lasted long, but they were

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an indication of the state of nervous tension all were in, and made one fearful of what might happen to all of us unless rescue came quickly. It was then that one would turn and watch for the Morning Star, that harbinger of unfailing hope. Serenely, like a beacon, it would gleam on the Eastern horizon, rising rapidly towards its zenith, telling that the night was almost past and that a new day was about to be born. It would take the pen of an angel to convey in cold prose something of the glory of returning day as one saw it from the vantage point of the raft. First the flush of pearl and crimson in the east, before which the stars paled out one by one; then the gradual widening of the arc of light over the ocean's face, followed presently by "the beauteous eye of heaven" itself, filling the world with its golden light.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Plane

"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life."

—Prov. 13:12.

*"Cease, every joy, to glimmer in my mind,
But leave—oh! leave the light of Hope behind!"*
—Campbell.

BY DAY AND NIGHT a watch was set. From the first day we were on the raft two men were constantly on duty aft. One of these steered by the sail. It was the only way of guiding it, since we had no rudder. Fortunately, the wind never once varied, but was always driving us west. One could readily understand how these dependable trade winds helped the mariners in other days, when there were no steamships. By day, of course, everyone was a self-appointed watchman, always on the lookout for some sign that would promise rescue. And always as the day faded and the westering sun cast its long shadows on the deep, we would whisper to ourselves, "Tomorrow, help will surely come tomorrow". Delusions they may have proved, but who could begrudge us these? It is pleasant at times to delude oneself with the whisperings of

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fancy, and to cling with eagerness to what may only prove to be the miserable phantoms of hope that shine like a will-o-the-wisp amidst the darkness of night and then vanish. So it was with us. Even if at times hope burned low within us during the dark hours of the night, it would surely be re-kindled in our hearts when the light of another day broke upon the world.

After we had been adrift a number of days we were thrilled one night with the lookout's cry that he could see lights far away on the starboard side. Soon they were plainly visible to us all, strung out far apart along the horizon. Some of the men suggested that we should alter course and make for the lights, stating that they were likely on one of the islands of the West Indies. Others thought it would be wiser to wait for the morning. At any rate, as the pros and cons were being discussed, the matter was taken out of our hands by the sudden disappearance of the lights, leaving us no alternative but to keep on our original course.

We had been adrift exactly one week when we saw our first plane. One will not readily forget the excitement it caused. Later we were to get used to hearing and seeing them without

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being unduly disturbed. Some of us were talking in fitful spells, as we all did. Some were lying down as comfortably as they could, trying to snatch a few minutes' sleep. Others were sitting idly gazing out over the ocean, when one of the men electrified us with the cry, "I hear a plane". I think that all felt at that moment something of the thrill the beleaguered garrison at Lucknow experienced when the Scottish girl cried that she could hear the sound of the pipes of Havelock coming to their rescue. Immediately we all came to life. In the course of the days that followed we learned by bitter experience and repeated disappointments not to expect too much, but that being the first plane sighted, our hopes ran high. It was a long distance away, but we could clearly hear the steady hum of its engines. We heard the pilot race his motors, and were sure this was a signal that he had seen us or one of the other rafts. That, however, was only wishful thinking, for the plane disappeared on the far horizon. The sound of its motors grew fainter and fainter and we saw it no more. During the next two weeks there were other planes that appeared in the sky, sometimes a long distance away and at other times nearby. One day two of them raised our hopes and anticipations to fever height with

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the thought that surely now the night of our agony was about over. But all failed to detect us. If anyone wonders at this he should remember that our raft of eight by ten feet was little more than a microscopic dot upon the heaving surface of the broad ocean. Altogether, ten or twelve planes must have passed over us during the days of our drifting on the deep. It was impossible not to feel disappointed and dejected at times, and sympathetic longing for those who did not have the spiritual comfort and consolation that our faith provided in the midst of these distressing circumstances.

Thus two weeks passed away. The sheer monotony of our days was beginning to tell, and one became fearful at times as to what the end would be unless help reached us soon. There was little to take our minds off ourselves, and the strain of constant proximity with one another was beginning to play havoc with our nerves. It manifested itself in many ways: irritability, impatience, and occasional outburst of passionate anger. I was thankful that none of the men ever came to blows or one trembles to think what the consequences to all of us might have been in such cramped space. Even the trivial tasks with which

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we had at first amused ourselves began to pall. Sometimes for hours we would just watch the sea and the sharks as we sailed on and on, ever westward. One day one of the men picked something round from the water as it floated past us. He said it was an unripe Avocado pear. It represented food, and that was all that mattered since our rations were so scanty. From long immersion in the water the pear was covered with tiny barnacles. These were scraped off, the rind cut, and some of the crew tried to eat it. But it was as wooden as a plank of the raft and just about as palatable. They gave it to Robert, who made a vain attempt to extract some nourishment from it, before he cast it in disgust to the sharks. Even they would not have it.

Then came THE PLANE

I shall never forget that Sunday evening. It had been a lovely day, and the setting sun was bathing the sea ahead of us in all the glory of living gold. I had tried to curl up on the corner of the raft to secure, if possible, a little sleep when the now familiar cry of "A plane, a plane" rang out. Hope had been deferred so often that I did not at first so much as raise my head. I thought

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it would be just like the others. It was not until the men shouted that we had been seen that I scrambled to my feet. I then witnessed an astonishing sight. Every man of our crew was on his feet—laughing, shouting and maybe crying, for all I know. Each was shaking hands with the other, and saying that they would now soon have the dinner they had so often talked and dreamed about during the long hours of the night. I looked up, and there was all the excuse needed for any demonstration of affection that ocean waifs such as we might indulge in. Flying round and round us in circles was a great American bomber, and the roar of its engines was the sweetest of music to our ears! There could be no mistake this time about being seen! Someone ordered us all to stand up so that those on the plane could see that there was a woman and children on board. This we did. We waved our hands, we shouted, we laughed and probably would have danced for joy had there been room.

For a considerable time the plane circled around us. Then we saw something fall from it. It was a package of food. It struck the water with a resounding smack not far from us and burst into pieces. We could see the ham sand-

wiches and other eatables meant for us being gobbled up by the sharks, and great slices of good bread spread across the surface of the water. Great, indeed, was our disappointment. The mishap must have been apparent to the crew of the plane. For several minutes it circled round and round. Then it drew off to a greater height. The next moment the engines opened up with an ear-splitting roar as the big machine came hurtling out of the sky towards us. Down it came, almost in a straight dive. We could see men looking down on us from the windows. Then it flattened out and a bare fifty feet above our heads, roared again into the blue. But it left something behind. Just as it passed over out dropped another box, covered with bright yellow, waterproof paper. It struck the water only a short distance from our raft and remained there, bobbing up and down on the surface of the sea. Two of the men instantly climbed into the "doughnut", paddled over to the box of food and dragged it towards us.

Never, surely, was any hamper at Christmas or any other season opened with greater eagerness and thankfulness! How we blessed those men from the clouds. In the parcel we found

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individual cartons of food for each of us. The aviators must have robbed their own stores to supply our need. In each carton were three tins of pemmican, in addition to chocolate and other things. Still the plane circled around. Once again it swooped down and again we saw a package hurtle towards us, attached to a life-preserver to keep it afloat. Once again the doughnut was requisitioned, and the precious package salvaged. This one contained one tin of corned beef, one tin of spam, four tins of condensed milk, in addition to many bottles of malted milk tablets—eighteen of which, unfortunately, were broken. That was a great grief to us since we could have used them all.

That night we dined royally. For the first time in fourteen days everyone had enough to eat. The corned beef and the spam were like ambrosia, and the drink of condensed milk (which all received) will linger long in my memory. But above all were "the warm and joyful thoughts we had" about our rescue. We felt sure that the plane which had so befriended us in our need would radio our location to the shore and that by the next day a ship would pick us up. With these thoughts in our mind we feted. We ate

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our pemmican and we drank most of our water. Why not enjoy it now? Were we not going to be rescued from the perils of the sea tomorrow? Then there would be food and drink in abundance for everyone . . . a chair to sit in, against which one could rest one's tired back . . . a bed to lie in and stretch deliciously . . . soothing salve for the raw sores on our feet! Do you wonder that we were merry that night, that few of us even thought of trying to sleep? The Morning Star shone with a new radiance as I saw it rise on that Monday morning. Then, high in his chariot, rode the great lamp of day. It shone upon seventeen derelicts whose hearts beat high with hope. As the sun went down, seventeen hearts were touching the bottom of the pit of despair.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Elijah's God

"Elijah prayed . . . and the heaven gave rain."
— James 5:17, 18.

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."—Tennyson.

DAWN! WITH ONE EXULTANT BOUND the sun emerged from the dark caverns of night, to fill the world with glorious light on that lovely morning of September 14. No one had slept much. All were awake in keenest anticipation. We had our prayers and breakfast. There was sufficient food for us now and if our water was scarce, what of it? Was this not to be the day of rescue from the black nightmare that had been ours for the past two weeks? After the visit of the plane we felt sure that the ship would come, and we were ready, keyed up to the highest pitch of excitement when it actually did appear on the horizon! Yes, there it was—a long grey ship, apparently moving in our direction. Surely they could not fail to see us. We watched and waited in an agony of suspense, torn between hopes and fears. For several hours it swept in great circles, apparently seeking us. Then, with a sickening

of the heart we saw it depart, until presently there was only a smudge of smoke on the distant horizon. To say that we were disappointed would be putting the matter too mildly. Bitter, bitter, was the pain when we realized that once again our hopes had been vain, another mirage that had faded away on the heaving bosom of the ocean.

I cannot tell why the ship did not sight us, assuming that it had come to look for the raft. If the plane gave our position correctly we could not have gone far in the night, since ours was a very slow-moving craft. But the fact remains that it did not sight us, so once again we took up the weary burden of our days of waiting, waiting, watching, and wondering, "When will rescue come?"

All that day gloom settled on the raft. Most of us realized that we could not go on much longer. Once again the bos'n warned "those that believe in prayer" to get busy, for the raft was showing signs of breaking up. As a matter of fact, there were other "breaking up" signs that caused one more concern than the raft. Its stout timbers could still stand a great deal of the buffetings of wind and weather, but the men

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themselves were obviously going to pieces under these bludgeonings of chance, as they supposed them to be. I prayed much all that day and night, and no doubt others in the homeland were doing the same, for again I was conscious of the sustaining grace of God.

We were now faced with another problem that added to our anxieties. It was that of water. As I have said, we drank most of the precious fluid the previous day, so sure were we of being rescued. There was an open container of oil on the raft. Had it been vegetable oil we would have drunk it, but it was not. Someone suggested that we should use it for our feet in an attempt to alleviate the sores that were now a great trial to most of us. My own feet were swollen greatly, and the sores so painful as to make standing a burden. In saying this I am not seeking sympathy for myself. All the others, with the exception of the bos'un, were in a similar condition. I do not know whether the oil helped them or not. I doubt it, since it was washed off almost at once when our feet went back into the water on the raft. All the first-aid kit with which the raft was equipped had long since been used up. There had been a bottle of iodine, and we had

used that on our pedal extremities, though I am afraid it provided only temporary relief.

The bos'un warned us again that our water supply was running short. I need hardly say that the two ounces of water was nothing like enough to satisfy one's need. Our thirst never seemed to be quenched, and always our cry was that of *Oliver Twist*, "More, please". But no more was forthcoming. The bos'n, who had the handing out of the rations, was adamant, and though we often asked for a wee drop more in the morning, he would not grant it. Perhaps it was best, since none knew how long we would have to depend on our slim supply. It was obvious that all of us could not go on much longer as we were. Food had almost lost its interest for me, particularly the dry crackers, which I found impossible to chew, owing to the lack of moisture in my mouth. I gave my share to the children, who were glad to have it. But it was water we panted for—cool, clear, fresh water. We felt at times as though we could drink gallons of it and still not be satisfied. How vividly the words of the "Ancient Mariner" came to mind, "Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink". As a matter of fact, some of the men were already

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beginning to try to eke out our meagre water ration by taking sea water in their mouths to relieve the intense and distressing dryness. But that was a dangerous practice, since one's last state would inevitably be worse than the first, and madness lay at the end if no relief were obtained. For the most part, we were content to endure the discomfort that lay between the mouthful of water in the morning and the mouthful at night. But now even that amount was likely to be cut down.

It was the second day after we had sighted the plane and the day following the appearance of the ship that the water situation began to look grave. In the morning we could see a dark cloud passing by on the far horizon. The bos'n said that unless that cloud changed and came near us we could not hope for the rain we needed so badly. It was immediately suggested by the men that I should ask God to send the cloud our way and so give us rain. One could almost smile at the naivete of the request. I am afraid that to many of these men God was a convenience to be used in time of danger and distress, not a gracious Being to be loved and served. In their own queer way they seemed to feel that my prayers

might avail where their own would surely fail.

So we prayed. I am setting forth exactly what occurred, and would not dare to falsify the record of these facts. Everyone who was aboard the raft knows them to be true, even though some who read these lines may doubt. I asked our heavenly Father to please send us rain if that was His will; to turn the clouds in our direction. Let me say here that I do believe we were permitted to arrive at the state we were in with regard to the water supply so that faith might be put to the test and God be glorified. To my mind the case seemed almost similar to that of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. It is true there were none of the latter on the raft, but there were men weighing in the balance the power of believing prayer to control the elements. In this instance the God of Elijah was to answer not by fire, but by water.

The rain came! In a very short time we saw the clouds change direction until the whole sky over us was black. Then the windows of heaven were opened. The rain came down in torrents of blessing. In a minute or two we were again drenched to the skin, but who minded that? Mary and I stood up and I guided the water down our

canvas canopy, while the bos'un and the men sitting under the canopy caught the water in the hat and drinking cups and proceeded with the aid of a crudely fashioned funnel, to fill up the water kegs. Every few minutes they would cease these operations long enough to pass around a drink for everyone. Over and over again we enjoyed the luxury of a brimming cupful—and still it poured without cessation. Then the good news went around "One barrel full", and we started on the second. Still it rained and still we drank. For the first time since we had been on the raft we felt we had enough water to drink. It pelted our faces until it hurt, and ran through our hair and down our cheeks in a blessed stream of life-giving refreshment. To see any of it go to waste was distressing, and I drank and drank again as it rushed down the greasy canvas, wondering if I could ever be satisfied.

The other barrel was about full when, almost as suddenly as it had commenced, the rain ceased, as it generally does in these latitudes. Then the sun shone forth and we basked in its radiance and warmth until our clothes were again partially dry. All were greatly impressed by this signal answer to prayer and the hearts of some, at least,



Richard and Carol Shaw



Richard and Carol Shaw

were thrilled with gratitude and praise. But the impressions made were, I fear, evanescent. Perhaps "good resolutions" to lead "a better life" were made, and some hearts may have been stirred by this manifestation of Divine grace, but too often it happens that, when the immediate need is met, God is forgotten. So prone are we, when warmed and fed, to fear the creature more than the Creator, and to value the seen above the unseen.

But that was not the end of our experiences of Divine goodness that day. When the rain ceased we were shivering with cold, though the warmth of the sun quickly helped to alleviate our distress. Then, as evening drew on, the sky that had remained unclouded during the afternoon began to darken over our heads. We now had all the water we required for the present. If it should rain again with anything like the intensity it had during the day, it would mean a night of shivering cold and distress. The men were aware of this, and we all looked anxiously at the lowering clouds. Again we presented our petitions before the Throne of Grace with thankfulness, asking the Lord to save us from the discomfort of a wet night on the raft. In gracious condescen-

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sion God saw fit to answer that prayer also and not a drop of rain fell that night. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." My heart was melted with the thought of His loving-kindness and tender mercy.

I have set these things down just as they occurred in the hope that they may help some reader of these pages to take heart again, and to "rest in the Lord". The story of the spiritual experiences of those who are seeking to follow the Lord so often parallels that of Elijah, who "was a man of like passions as we are". He had sublime confidence and faith in God when confronted with apparently gigantic difficulties, and again was sunk in dejection when he thought that God had deserted him and that he alone was left to worship and to serve the living and the true God. Molehills of trial can often overwhelm us, while mountains of difficulty act as a challenge and a spur to faith. It should not be so, but the fact remains that it is. Perhaps there are some great souls who walk the celestial heights undisturbed by either the little or the great, and whose trust in the Divine goodness never varies or wavers. A great experience such

as we had had of the right hand of the Most High stretched forth to help us should have forever destroyed unbelief and convinced the most skeptical on the raft that God is and God reigns. But I fear it was not so. Twice in the same day had the power of Omnipotence been exercised on our behalf. Surely that would not have happened if God was going to allow us to perish. In spite of this conviction, anxious thoughts sometimes crowded one's mind in the silent watches of the night as the signs of mental disturbance became more and more evident and one reflected on the dreadful possibilities and consequences that might ensue. But even though for a time we might be under the juniper tree, nothing could rob us of the consciousness and the comfort of the experience that "Elijah's God still lives today."

CHAPTER NINE

The Jaws of Death

"I was wounded in the house of my friends."
—Zech. 13:6.

"That was the most unkindest cut of all."
—Shakespeare.

WATER PRESERVED OUR LIVES, as recorded in the last chapter. Now, by fire, in the shape of belching guns, they were nearly ended—but I must not anticipate.

We had now been drifting on the South Atlantic for almost three weeks. No one seemed to know where we were, since we had no means of checking our course except by the stars. All we knew was that we were sailing westward. We had hoped to strike Trinidad or one of the West Indian Islands. We did not know it then, but our little raft had carried us over three hundred miles of sea and far past our intended destination.

With the varied disappointments that had been ours it is hardly to be wondered at if a state of apathy settled down upon the raft. The strain of these days was taking its toll. Nerves were

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stretched to the limit and it was obvious that some were at the breaking point. George Marano, one of the firemen and a strong, well-built fellow, was nearly at the end of his resources. Poor fellow, his ribs stuck through his flesh and he had hardly a stitch of clothes left. Towards the end of the third week he could not stagger to his feet to take his watch on account of the soreness of his feet and his generally weak condition. Many of the other men were in little better shape. But we all tried to settle down to our monotonous routine.

What did we do to pass the time? Mostly, the men talked about what they would do when they got home, which no doubt helped to maintain morale. Glorious were the feasts and the promises of future entertainment that were visualized during those days. Each one vowed he would treat the rest to his own particular kind of dinner, and there would be no limit to the expense or the capacity of the diners. So much had the thought of food and rest seized hold upon the imaginations of the men that they even talked about it in their sleep. It was no uncommon thing to hear someone rave at night of coffee or blankets, and awaken the others from their un-

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easy slumbers to indulge in bitter recriminations. These petty bickerings were becoming more and more frequent—a sure sign that an outbreak of violence might be precipitated. I had found a little piece of burlap and some kapok and spent much time fashioning a little cushion for myself, to relieve somewhat the hardness of the board on which I had sat for almost three weeks.

The nights were the worst, particularly as we drew on towards the end of our experience. There was always the danger of someone becoming insane. In saying this one does not suggest that any of the members on the raft had reached that stage. But there were ominous signs that one could not but view with the gravest disquietude. I wondered how long we could endure, and prayed earnestly that the God who had seen us through such fearful trials would still be our guard and our guide. And always during these last days the Lord gave me the same verse: "He will not suffer thee to be tempted above that ye are able." And here again I record it to His glory that He proved it in my experience to be true. Though the bow was stretched almost to the utmost limit, and the cord of human reason was often taut, it did not

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snap. But each night when one sat in silent contemplation of the stars and watched the phosphorescent gleam of the waters in the wake of the little raft that seemed to be journeying nowhere, one wondered "how long". I could hear the men talking incoherently in their sleep, the children moving restlessly as they lay with their heads pillowed on my lap, while the men on watch stared wearily towards the dark horizon and I scanned the east for the Morning Star and wished for the day.

So we come to that never-to-be-forgotten morning of the 18th of September. The previous night the children had awakened saying, "I smell chocolate". Some of the men also awoke and were aware that someone had been pilfering our precious food supply under cover of darkness. No charges were made, but by unanimous consent it was decided that all the food should then and there be divided between us, so each would have his own share to consume or save as he thought best. This was accordingly done. I had a feeling that day that something was going to happen. The tension could not last long. We were now on our last ration of food and the prospect of receiving any further supply from a plane

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did not appear any too bright. But God stood by me, and there was the calm assurance that He would not forsake us.

About eight o'clock that morning a plane passed over our heads. It was flying high and did not see us. Two or three times it circled around where we were, and then disappeared. I had tried to lie down on my corner of the raft in order to obtain a much-needed rest when I was aroused by the cry "Convoy" by the man on lookout! Never till my dying day shall I forget the sight that greeted me. There on the horizon to our left and travelling north-east, was a line of five great merchant ships, shepherded by two destroyers of the Allied Nations. The flood of emotion that swept our souls was impossible to describe. We were right in their path, and there did not seem the slightest possibility of their missing us. When we saw a destroyer break away and come tearing over the sea towards us we felt sure we were rescued. On and on she came, the water breaking in a great cataract from her narrow, streamlined bow. Then the incredible happened. Even as we watched, there was a roar and a leaping flame from her deck as a shell screamed over our heads, to hit the water

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a short distance behind us! It was quickly followed by another and another till, with a sickening horror, we realized that we were being shelled! All our hard experiences of the past three weeks seemed to culminate in this last terror. One shell burst a short distance ahead of us, casting up an enormous cataract of yellowish-green water. Another struck the water and ricocheted over our heads, throwing us into a panic! The children screamed in terror, throwing themselves down in the bottom of the raft. We were all in a frenzy, shouting and waving our arms. Sick with apprehension, I called on God to save us from this last dreadful calamity. Someone shouted to cut down the mast and the flagpole we had rigged up on top of it. In the twinkling of an eye it was down and being frantically waved from side to side. Almost instantly the destroyer ceased firing, but during these few brief minutes we lived a lifetime of agony. In all, about sixteen shots were fired, and had we been a submarine, as it was thought we were, we should certainly have been sunk, since the shells hit behind and before and on either side and never more than a few yards away. It was my first experience under shell-fire and I trust it will be my last! That we were not hit I ascribe

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once again to the merciful care of God. The hand that guided us across the trackless ocean and supplied our needs, prevented our destruction at the last!

In a few moments the destroyer drew alongside. As she came closer, our men called out: "We're Americans! We're survivors from a torpedoed ship!" The rails were lined with sailors and preparations were quickly made to receive us. One or two of the men who were able scrambled up to the low deck, then the rest of us were lifted, pushed, and pulled up until all were on board. While being transferred from the raft to the ship I had the misfortune to break a rib, but it didn't seem to matter much just then, such was the overwhelming relief and joy at being rescued at last. It seems hardly credible that all of us were able to walk on board the destroyer, even though it was more of a hobble than a walk and for some, agony. Never shall I forget the first luxury of sinking into a big, comfortable armchair, where I could rest my back. Mary sat nearby. Carol and the boys were being cared for elsewhere. A cup of hot tomato soup was given to us, also some bread, an apple, and an orange each. Surely no food ever tasted so

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pleasant! Then the doctor came and gave first aid to our sores, after which we slept for several hours. For the kindness of the officers and men on that boat we shall always be grateful.

CHAPTER TEN

Journey's End

"Who delivered us from so great a death."

—2 Cor. 1:10.

*"O God, Thy arm was here;
And not to us, but to Thy arm alone
Ascribe we all."*

—Shakespeare.

MY STORY IS DONE. The nightmare was over. At last we were safe on an Allied destroyer and subject to the kindly ministrations of friends. The convoy was proceeding from a West Indian port to another in a faraway part of the world, except for one ship—a Dutch vessel that was bound for Barbados. It was decided to have all survivors transferred to that ship, and this was accomplished in the afternoon. By this time none of us could walk or stand upright, and the sores on our feet and bodies were aching badly. By an excellent feat of seamanship the two vessels were brought together and the transfer made, each of us being lifted across the rail of one boat to the other. They placed us on the hatch cover and we sat there until the two vessels pulled away. Our last view of the destroyer was of the captain and the officers watching from the

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bridge, and the sailors crowding the deck, all waving farewell and calling out their good wishes. To these we gratefully responded.

After the destroyer had departed we were made comfortable in the cabins. The steward made me a delicious cup of tea; and I can still remember how contented the children looked—munching great slices of bread and strawberry jam—as I passed through the dining saloon on my way to the captain's cabin, where I rested until we reached Barbados. We steamed into port about five that evening. When the throb of the engines had ceased, I raised myself on one elbow and looked through the porthole. What a beautiful sight—trees and the red-tiled roofs of buildings! Surely here was rest for eyes weary with continued gazing at the perpetual heaving of the waves!

It was pleasant just to lie there and wait while arrangements were made for us to enter the hospital; to let one's mind recall the terrifying experiences of the past three weeks, and then luxuriate in the thought that it was all behind us. Presently the doctors came, and then began the painful ordeal of being removed to the small launch that was to take us ashore. The officers

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and men were gentleness personified as they carried us along narrow passages, eased us around sharp corners, and finally descended with us to the waiting launch. Then, in less time than it takes to tell, we reached the shore and our rescue was complete. We were on land again, and the terror of the deep was only a memory!

In the Book of Acts we are told that when St. Paul was wrecked near Malta, on his journey to Rome, the barbarians "showed us no little kindness". By simply changing the word "barbarians" to "Barbadians" how truthfully could we re-echo these sentiments. Oh, how welcome was the feel of land after those interminable days at sea! I longed to feel the solid earth beneath my feet again, though I was in no shape to realize the wish just then.

Barbados lies like a green leaf on the broad surface of the South Atlantic, just east of the reef-like line of the Lesser Antilles. It is not far from the French island of Martinique, which has figured so much in the news of late. Barbados has an area of 166 square miles, and has the distinction of being about the most densely populated spot on the face of the earth. Within the confines of the island is a population of about

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200,000, most of whom have a hard struggle for existence. Even before the war its exports, consisting almost entirely of sugar cane, had declined, owing to the beet subsidy in the United States and other places. The war has hit the island extremely hard economically. The sugar trade has been cut off almost entirely, creating conditions of extreme poverty and hardship for all, but especially for the poorer coloured population. Into the maelstrom of war all have been swept. Fortunately, there is no division of opinion on the war in this place. To a man—or a woman—they are united and nothing can equal the patriotism of these people, whether white or black.

But the war has heaped tragedy upon them. Into Barbados has come during the past three years, a stream of refugees like ourselves, and most nobly have these people risen to play the part of the Good Samaritan. We were the first woman and children survivors they had received. I do not think any of the seventeen of us who were landed from that Dutch ship last September will ever forget the extreme kindness shown to us by the Barbadians. Yet we were only a few of the many distressed and needy people who had arrived there after their ships had fallen prey to

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the U-boats that continually prowled the Caribbean. Take ourselves, for instance. I have already told how destitute we were. Even the clothes we landed in were not our own. Our rags were left on the destroyer that picked us up, being replaced by makeshift outfits kindly supplied by the sailors. Nothing that the islanders could have done for us was left undone. When we reached the dock, members of the St. John's Ambulance Brigade were on hand to meet us and transfer us at once to the General Hospital. For three weeks I lay there, during which time I received the utmost in human kindness and attention. Mary and the children recovered quickly and were about in a week. Friends took them into their homes until I was able to be out. Carol Shaw remained with me on account of her broken arm. Some of the crew were in hospital more than two weeks. All left Barbados by plane one week before we did.

What a heavenly relief it was to be able to see the coral-white streets of Bridgetown, as the capital of Barbados is called, after the unending vista of heaving waters and the unfailing companionship of sharks! What a joy just to listen to the noises associated with a town—noises that told



*A HAPPY REUNION - Rev. A. W. Roffe, Mary Bell,
Miss Nell Ruth Roffe, Mrs. A. W. Roffe,
Mrs. Bell and Robert*

JOURNEY'S END

us we were again back in civilization: the laughter of men and women, the cry of little children playing in the streets and the hundred and one other noises that we all take as a matter of course in our daily lives, but which now lay like the balm of Gilead on our strained nerves and told us that our nightmare was ended. It was not to be expected that one could endure what we had come through without some after-effects. There was the inevitable physical reaction, in which I, perhaps, suffered more than the others. The children got over their experiences very quickly, and in five or six days were well on the way to recovery and able to be out again.

It is an astonishing thing that, considering our experiences, no one suffered any permanent physical or mental injury. I say this because both doctors and nurses in the hospital admitted our case was one of the most remarkable that had come within the scope of their experience, and they had had many such as ours. Indeed, one of the nurses averred that the condition we were in on being admitted to the hospital, considering what we had gone through, was as much a miracle as the feeding of the five thousand. She said that people had come there physical and

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mental wrecks who had not gone through anything like what had been our lot.

I was in the hospital for three weeks. Once I was able to get about the Barbadians showered further kindness upon us. Indeed, from the time we were picked up by the destroyer, nothing but goodness and mercy filled the measure of our days. Surely the hand of the Lord was in all this, and our hearts overflowed with gratitude when we thought of all He had done for us. These were pleasant, languorous days we spent at Bridgetown. Sometimes one felt inclined to pinch oneself to make sure that it was real; that it was not one of the dreams we were having in those moments between waking and sleeping on the raft—dreams that mocked us cruelly as we imagined we had warm beds, good food, tea and coffee and the light of friendly faces; dreams that faded away with returning consciousness. But this was the real thing, we kept telling ourselves. Yes, it was gloriously true. There was no unsubstantial fabric of a dream about the kindness of the Barbadians.

The American Government had given us every consideration. On learning of our safe arrival, the mission headquarters in New York

had been busy, and the Government had kindly granted us priority on a plane that took us to New York. What a vivid experience that flight was, in contrast to the three weeks we had been tossing about on the ocean! Here we were in the luxurious depths of an easy chair, winging our way over the blue-green Caribbean at hundreds of miles an hour. The tale of our twenty days on a raft was indeed ended.

Most of the men came to see me before I left the hospital. They were all grateful for the little spiritual ministrations one had tried to bring them during the days that were behind us. It was then that one of them told me he had found the Lord as His Saviour and been "born again". Perhaps something was accomplished in the hearts of others, some good seed sown that may lead them into the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Perhaps you who have accompanied me in spirit through the pages of this book during this brief portrayal of those perilous three weeks will pray also for these men. Before he left one of them said to me: "Mrs. Bell, there was a light over that raft." He was right. There was—the Light of the Eternal Presence of God.

Following is the list of persons aboard the raft:

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Captain Benjamin Bogden*; Mr. Croons* (Signaller); Frank S. Flaver; Joseph Greenwell (First Asst. Engineer); Robert McDaniel; Woodman Potter (Second Cook); George Marano (Fireman); Isabelino Pacheco; James Peifer (Bos'un); C. J. Rodrigez (Chief Cook); Sevier Seremos; Louis G. Vega; John Vargas; Levi Walker (Steward).

Women: Mrs. Ethel Bell; Children: Mary Bell, Robert Bell, Richard Shaw and Carol Shaw.

* Died on raft.

POSTSCRIPT

TO YOU WHO HAVE READ these pages may I address a final word. I have tried to set forth in what has gone before a faithful record of the experiences of those nerve-wracking 20 days on the raft. I have sought to glorify God in our deliverance since it was He alone that did it. I do not pretend to say that every event set down here is in its correct order and sequence. Some of them may not be. One's memory becomes confused as to time, and whether certain events occurred, for instance, in the first or second week in which we were adrift, it is difficult to say. Since no written record could be made we had to depend on our memories, and for the most part every day was like the one that preceded it. It is strange how we differ in our recollections of certain happenings. Looking backwards today from the quiet comfort of home life in Canada or the United States many of the details of our experiences slip into a mist of indefiniteness, leaving only the broad outlines of our journey still vivid in one's mind.

In your mind as in mine, I am sure there arises one inevitable question, why were we saved and others taken? Why were Mr. and Mrs.

Shaw and Georgia summoned into the presence of the King and Richard and Carol left? Why should I and my children have been saved? Why did the other three rafts and their occupants so completely disappear. Perhaps there is a "natural" answer to some of these questions. I cannot tell. I do know that God sometimes moves in a mysterious way, trite as the observation may seem, and that it is not always given to us here to see all the plan in the weaving of the pattern of our lives. And I also know beyond shadow of a doubt that "our times are in His hand, Who saith a whole I planned", that however dark and over-shadowed with care our path here may be, we shall find at the end, if we trust Him, that He has done all things well. I do not say this as a theoretical proposition but as a living experience tried and tested in some little degree in a missionary's life. I believe that God has spared our lives for a purpose, and it is my daily endeavour to be so conformed to His will that the plan and purpose He has for me and for my children may be gloriously fulfilled.

If you have read thus far in these pages, it is probably because you are a Christian man or woman who believes as I do in prayer, "both for

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ourselves and for those who call us friends" as the greatest living force in human life. Will you therefore pray for us and for our work in the future, whatever it may be, for little Carol Shaw and Richard bereft of their parents and sister, and for the testimony we tried to bear for Christ to the men on the raft.

RICHARD SHAW'S STORY

HERE IS THE ACCOUNT given by Richard Shaw, age 13, of his experiences. We have left it as he set it down. It is written in his boyish way, and will be read with interest, we feel sure.

"We left Bangui on July 4, 1942. The river boat took us to Brazzaville in six days. We crossed the river to Leopoldville and stayed at the Mission House for a week. Then we took a train to Matadi, this journey taking one day. We waited for a week at Matadi before we got the boat. We were told it was the biggest freighter in America. Mrs. Bell, her two children, Robert and Mary and a Mr. Pearson besides our family were the only passengers on the ship. We left Matadi at ten in the morning, one week after we arrived there. It took us four days to get to Lagos, the first stop, and two days to Tacoradi, the last stop. Two weeks after we left there, and when we were two and a half days from Trinidad, the boat was torpedoed on August 30th. We children were playing on the third hatch. It was there the torpedo struck at 2 p.m., right underneath our feet. Robert Bell was down in the navy quarters, and when I heard the alarm I ran on the starboard side to get my life-belt, and that

was the side that was hit. While I was going to get it I stopped to look at the water coming in. I was getting wet and I slipped and fell. Then I ran to the port side. Then the second torpedo hit us. After that I could not go and get my life-belt for there were big chunks of iron flying everywhere, and I knew I would get hit. By that time I was hiding behind one of the ventilators with one of the navy boys named "Slim", and he heard me praying. When they stopped shooting I ran to the life boat. They told us all to get into the lifeboat, then they told us to get out because the ship was turning over. As soon as I stepped out the water was up to my ankles, and the next thing I knew I was in the water. The whirlpool took me down. When I was under the water I felt someone's foot. I held on to it and climbed up his leg, and found it was one of my friends. He saw a lifebelt floating around and hooked a stick in it and helped me to put it on.

A short time later I swam to one of the rafts, and was the first to be picked up. Then we went around and helped to pick up the rest of the people. When we had picked them all up we found that there were about 20 missing, and my mother and sister were among them. There were

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four rafts and we were all tied together. We went floating away, expecting to get somewhere. That night we thought we saw a ship, but found it was a cloud. It was very uncomfortable. The waves were going over us all the time and we were very cold. We were never dry, always wet. The next morning the captain and the cook lit two flares, but they didn't do any good. I tried to get in the sun as much as I could, but I was never dry. Every time I got just about dry a wave would come over me and I would get wet just like I was in a cave. We had little food. Each day we got a half tin of pemmican, which is a mixture of apples, raisins, cocoanut, bacon and peanuts, and one square of chocolate and a graham cracker. We would try to sleep all day long. One day the signalman was unconscious. Then he died. He couldn't eat his own food. Someone had to feed him right before he died. Mrs. Bell preached a little and we rolled him overboard. What made the nights so long was because we went to sleep just as soon as it got dark. In the afternoon of the fourth day the captain became unconscious. The next day we saw a ship, but it didn't see us. We were on the raft nineteen days. The captain died the fourth day. Mrs. Bell preached again, and we buried him.

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We were still on the raft a long time. On a Friday we saw a convoy along the horizon. I was asleep and Robert Bell hit me on the shoulder and told me there was a convoy over there, and as soon as I looked at it I said, "Praise the Lord", and put my head down and went to sleep again. Then I was awakened by the shooting, for it seemed like the whole convoy was shooting at us, thinking we were a submarine. There were seven ships in the convoy. The shells they fired at us were three feet long. Then the destroyer came closer and picked us up. When we got to the destroyer I climbed up the side on a net. By that time everybody was praising the Lord, and the men apologized for shooting at us.

I had four big bowls of tomato soup, chocolate, orange and malted milk. Then I had grapefruit juice and an apple.

That same night we landed at Barbados, and I went to the hospital. I had big ulcers on my feet. I had one about the size of a quarter and I could stick my finger right down in it. Robert Bell and I were in the hospital five days. Then we went and stayed with Mrs. Douglas. We stayed there two weeks and I gained seven pounds in one week and Robert Bell gained ten pounds in one week.

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Then it was time for us to leave for Trinidad by plane. It took one hour and 15 minutes. We passed over Robinson Crusoe's Island in Tobago. They say if you go there you can see his cave, his tent, and all of his pets. We stayed in Trinidad about a week, then we got our passage to come up on the Pan-American Airways. We made four stops in the day's trip. We stayed at Hotel LaGuar. The next day we got on and had three more stops to Miami, that was two days' travel from Trinidad to Miami. We left Miami next morning by train with Mrs. Hawkins. We left there about 8 a.m. and got to the Westervelt Home about 10 p.m.

About two days before we got picked up a plane came and dropped food to us, the same as we had on the raft, except no graham crackers. When I was on the raft they told me I could go on watch, so I thought I was "somebody", so the next night when they told me to go up I said, "Oh no, it's too cold."

My father, who was hurt, was on one of the other rafts, and we talked to him several times. We wanted to be on the raft with him, but the captain would not let us go. The rafts were cut loose from each other, hoping one would be

picked up and tell of the others. That was the last I saw my father, and now I know we will never see him on earth again, but I am glad he and mother and Georgia are in heaven. I am so glad I have my sister Carol left with me. I didn't used to think much of sister, but now I do.

The noise of the waves seemed for a long time to be filling my ears with sound, and I could hear the noise the sharks made many, many times in the days that followed.

I still feel I want to eat enough so that if ever I am without food I would not be so hungry. The Lord answered so many prayers for us that I can never forget them. I think God must have some work for me to do because He saved me and I want to do it.

My little sister Carol slipped and fell on the deck and broke her elbow during the torpedoing. One of the crew picked her out of the water and brought her on the raft."

(There is something very touching and ingenuous in this simple narrative written just as a boy would tell it, without sequence or any attempt at embellishment. It will be gratifying to every reader to know that Richard and Carol Shaw have recovered nicely from their terrible experience.—J.H.H.)

Aftermath!

SINCE the story of the experience of Mrs. Bell was written, several things have happened which, it has been felt, might be added to round out the experience and it has been thought well to include them in a little supplemental note in this new edition. Mention has been made in the narrative of the story of one person (on one of the other rafts) having been washed ashore. That has now been verified. Only one man of all those on the other three rafts lived through the terrible ordeal to tell his tale, and he has been in touch with Mrs. Bell. His name is Mr. Elliott Gurnee.

It was also the great pleasure of Mrs. Bell to meet in New York one of the officers of the destroyer which rescued them. He was Lieutenant Craven, and was on the bridge the morning on which the raft was sighted. Their deliverance from the shell fire was so remarkable and miraculous that Mrs. Bell was determined to ask the officer if the intention was to destroy the raft. In reply to her question he said, "We had heard on that particular day there was a submarine in that area and just before sighting

AFTERMATH !

your raft we saw a plane way off on the horizon dropping depth charges. I took my binoculars and swept the ocean—and then I saw the raft! Of course, I thought 'There it is! There is the sub.!' I hadn't the slightest doubt in my mind and immediately gave the order to the gunners to open fire."

Mrs. Bell then asked Lieut. Craven if they were really in dead earnest about hitting them since many people had suggested they were only trying them out to see what their reaction would be and determine what the object really was. The officer said: "Oh, no, Mrs. Bell, in war you shoot first and ask questions afterwards. We were really aiming at you and did our best to blow what we thought was a U-Boat off the map." The officer then said he could not understand how they could have missed with the sixteen rounds that were fired and freely acknowledged that their deliverance was supernatural.

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